

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Dearborn Airstrip Lease Improvement
Proposed Implementation Date:	May 2021
Proponent:	Dearborn Ranch LLC
Location:	T16N, R04W, Section 4-Portions of SE4SW4, SW4SE4, SE4SE4, NE4SE4
County:	Lewis and Clark
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Dearborn Ranch LLC is proposing to access and utilize 0.31 acres of rangeland as a haul route that is 676.4 feet long on Section 4, T16N, R4W to make improvements to a private airstrip. Specifically, the proponent is seeking to access, overland by truck, certain areas of the existing airstrip to conduct construction activities to improve the airstrip facilities. The need of this access is due to the inability to transverse the existing runway with heavy equipment and truck transport of construction materials. Also, the proponent wishes to install a turn around to service the existing airstrip of which a portion is on state trust land and authorized by an existing commercial lease # 3072926.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Agencies, Groups or Individuals Scoped:	Response:
CLO, DNRC-landowner	Neutral
Dearborn Ranch LLC- Surface Lessee	Proponent is in favor of the project.
Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archeologist	Neutral

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Alternative: To authorize the project to allow access to conduct lease improvement, construction activities.

No Action Alternative: To not authorize the project to allow access to conduct lease improvement, construction activities.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The topography of the lands considered in the proposed project area consists of gentle rolling pasture and agricultural lands with occasional coulee breaks. According to NRCS soil surveys, soils are predominantly Regent-Auchard Loams with slopes at 2-8 percent. These soils are moderately suited for haul roads.

Proposed Alternative- Impacts from heavy equipment operations to the soils would be temporary and soils are anticipated to return to normal. No impacts to fragile, compactable, or unstable soils or any unusual geologic features are anticipated. Any rutting, sluffing or loss of vegetation will be mitigated by blading, harrowing, and seeding with a recommended seed mixture.

No Action Alternative- No impacts to fragile, compactable, or unstable soils or any unusual geologic features will occur.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

The project area does not contain any significant surface water resources. A small, ephemeral watercourse resulting from precipitation drainage does exist adjacent to the airstrip but will be avoided on State Land.

Proposed Alternative- No direct or cumulative impacts to water quality are anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

No Action Alternative- No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

In general, this area is considered to be of high-quality regarding air standards with good ventilation. Operations may temporarily influence air quality while activities are taking place. When the activity is complete, air quality will quickly be restored to normal conditions.

Proposed Alternative- No direct or cumulative effects are expected to occur to air quality as a result of the proposed action.

No Action Alternative- No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

A review of Natural Heritage data through NRIS was completed for T16N, R4W. No plant species of concern were noted. There are no known rare plants or cover types present. A grass seed mixture recommended by the Department will be required to be applied to disturbed project areas.

Proposed Alternative- Temporary, small disturbances to plant communities located within the proposed project area would occur. Vegetative communities would not be permanently altered. No impacts to rare plants or cover types are anticipated. No direct or cumulative impacts are anticipated. A grass seed mixture recommended by the Department will be required to be applied to disturbed project areas.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The small project area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, these tracts provide habitat for a variety of big game species (pronghorn antelope, mule deer, whitetail deer, and occasionally elk), predators (coyote, fox, and badger), upland game birds, other non-game mammals, raptors, various songbirds, among others.

Proposed Alternative- Habitats would be temporarily disturbed during project activities. No lasting impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and/or habitats are anticipated.

No Action Alternative- No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified four "Species of Concern" including: Sprague's Pipit, Long-billed Curlew, Grizzly Bear, Black-tailed Prairie Dog. No recent, specific occurrences of these species have been reported within the 0.31-acre project area. Adjacent aviation operations consistent with the existence of the airstrip have been ongoing with obvious impacts to wildlife populations thereof.

Proposed Alternative- None of the area's wildlife would be affected beyond temporary displacement during implementation of the project. No direct or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. No additional archaeological

investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

Proposed Alternative- No direct or cumulative effects are expected to occur to historical and archaeological sites as a result of the proposed action.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposed project area represents a typical rural, farming and ranching community found in this geographic area in Cascade County, Montana.

Proposed Alternative- The state land in this proposal does not provide any unique or scenic qualities. This proposed project will not be visible from any populated areas. No direct or cumulative effects to the aesthetics are anticipated.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Proposed Alternative- The demands on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy would not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed on this EA.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The proposed project would create human health and/or safety risks associated with construction activities and the operation of heavy equipment.

Proposed Alternative-No impacts to human health or safety are anticipated a result of the proposal.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Proposed Alternative- The project would improve the commercial lease infrastructure and not result in damage to range conditions or adjacent agricultural lands.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The project would be completed in a relatively short time frame and will be completed by ranch staff and private contractors. Therefore, the project would not significantly impact permanent jobs

Proposed Alternative-The proposal is not anticipated to affect the quantity and distribution of employment.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Proposed Alternative- The project would not have any measurable effects to local or state tax revenues.

No Action Alternative- No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Proposed Alternative-The proposal would not have any impacts on government services.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The proposed action follows State and County law. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

Proposed Alternative- No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated to occur.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This state land is in a rural setting, legally accessible, and has fair recreational value. The proposal would not affect authorized, recreational activities for very long (a few weeks outside of general hunting season).

Proposed Alternative- The proposed action is not anticipated to impact authorized recreational and wilderness activities on this state land.

No Action Alternative- No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Proposed Alternative-The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments. No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Proposed Alternative- No native or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity would be impacted by the proposal. No direct or cumulative effects are expected to occur to air quality as a result of the proposed action.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed project area represents a typical rural farming and ranching community found in this geographic area in Lewis and Clark County, Montana.

Proposed Alternative- The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

No Action Alternative-No direct or cumulative impacts will occur.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Proposed Alternative- The proposed action should result in improved infrastructure of the commercial lease for the private airstrip. Access across State Trust Land will generate \$400.00 of revenue for the Common Schools Trust.

No Action Alternative- current conditions would prevail.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Andy Burgoyne	Date: April 20, 2021
	Title: Trust Land Program Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Proposed Alternative: Approve the project as proposed to allow access to conduct lease improvement, construction activities to existing commercial lease #3072926.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:


This project should have no significant, detrimental impacts or cumulative effects regarding the project area. To address the minimal ground disturbance, appropriate mitigation measures should occur which will include washing equipment and vehicles before entering state land, weed control, and re-seeding disturbed areas as necessary with a seed mix recommended by DNRC staff.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

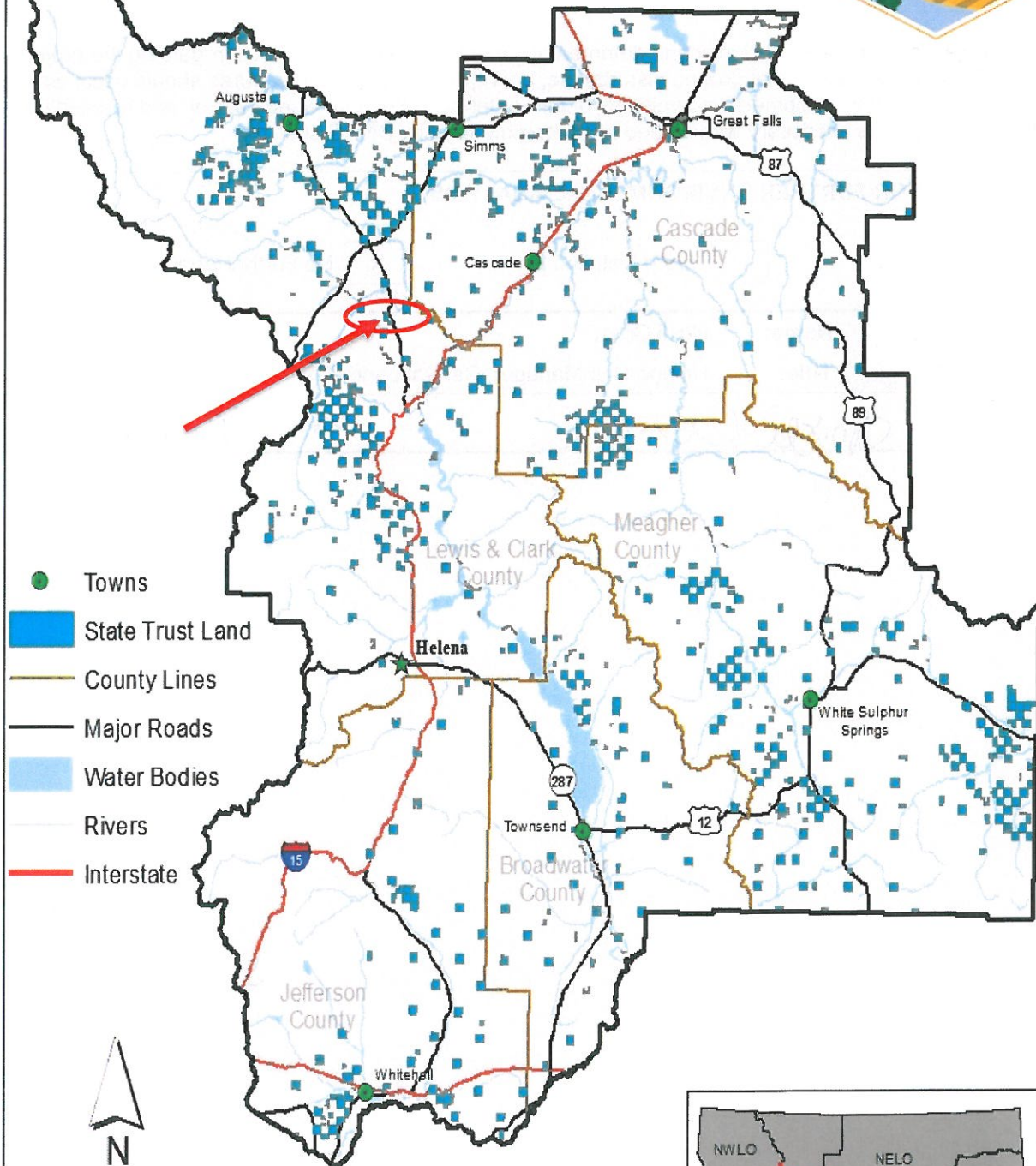
☐ EIS

☐ More Detailed EA

☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Heidi Crum
	Title: Helena Unit Manager, Central Land Office
Signature: 	Date: 4/20/21

State Trust Land Vicinity Map Helena Unit

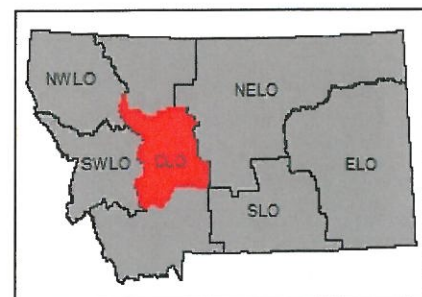


- Towns
- State Trust Land
- County Lines
- Major Roads
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- Interstate



0 10 20 40 Miles

Produced by Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation 11/1/2019
Datum: NAD 1983 StatePlane





04

Airstrip,
commercial
lease

16N 4W

Haul Route

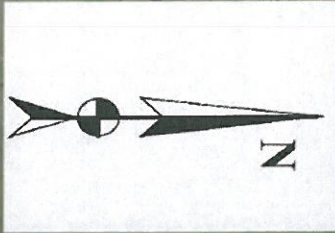
676.4 feet

676.4ft x 20ft = 13,528 sq ft
= 0.31 acres used for haul
route

03



Dearborn Airstrip-Lease Conversion
LUL 8619
Section 16, T16N, R04W
39.46 acres



Area: 38.27 ac
Perimeter: 1.19 mi

Length: 1,723.69 ft

